

PAWEŁ KSIĄŻEK

Persons
Projects

Paweł Książek's main medium is painting, though he can be easily called an interdisciplinary artist. On the basis of archival photographs and film, Książek finds common motifs for seemingly disparate themes, which he in turn connects in a collage-like-way on canvas. Before Książek reaches for his brush, he seeks out iconographic sources on the Internet, in books, films (most often of the 1920s), and music. The research process is, for Książek, the main focus. He carefully excavates images to compile information that eventually converges on a core problem. His work is full of quotes and allusions: for example, the artist combines Black Metal music with modernism (the De Stijl vs. Black Metal series), German Expressionist cinema with modernist architecture of Central/Eastern Europe (Silent Utopia) or South

America (Constructions), or the performances of Marina Abramović and Valie Export with the films of the Jackass series (N.N. vs. Artists). Książek effectively blends pop and high culture, and the past with visions of the future. This means that we might call him a conceptual painter.

Paweł Książek (*1973) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow and Hochschule für Gestaltung in Offenbach am Main. Lives and works in Krakow and Szczecin. He has been lecturer at the Academy of Art in Szczecin since 2014, and associate professor since 2020. Książek was a resident at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin (2011) and SOArt in Austria (2013). Holder of the scholarship of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in 2008. His works have been

presented at: Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg (2009); Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Krakow (2008); Art Stations Foundation, Poznań (2009); Polish Institute in Berlin (2012); Art Basel Statements in Basel (2009), Foksal Gallery, Warsaw (2020) among other venues, as well as dozens of group exhibitions at such institutions as the National Museum in Krakow; National Museum in Szczecin; MAXXI, Rome; Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten, Marl; Arnold Schönberg Centre, Vienna; Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; MOCAM Museum of Contemporary Art, Krakow; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin.

MOVEMENT, 2021 - 2023

“Since the beginning of his career, Książek has been interested in the roots of modernism. The methodology which the artist uses is based on working with archives, encyclopedic and factual sources. He develops his path of investigation by using the analytical studies of avant-garde aesthetics. He researches the mutual relations between the human body and objects in space, nature, and culture through their construction and deconstruction. The result of Książek’s creative process has several layers. It begins with a series of text-image works on paper based on a very careful selection of photos and motifs. Książek’s texts are written onto the drawings in an encyclopaedia-like style, presenting stories that reveal the connections between the historical events as well as the biographies of the artists. These conceptual

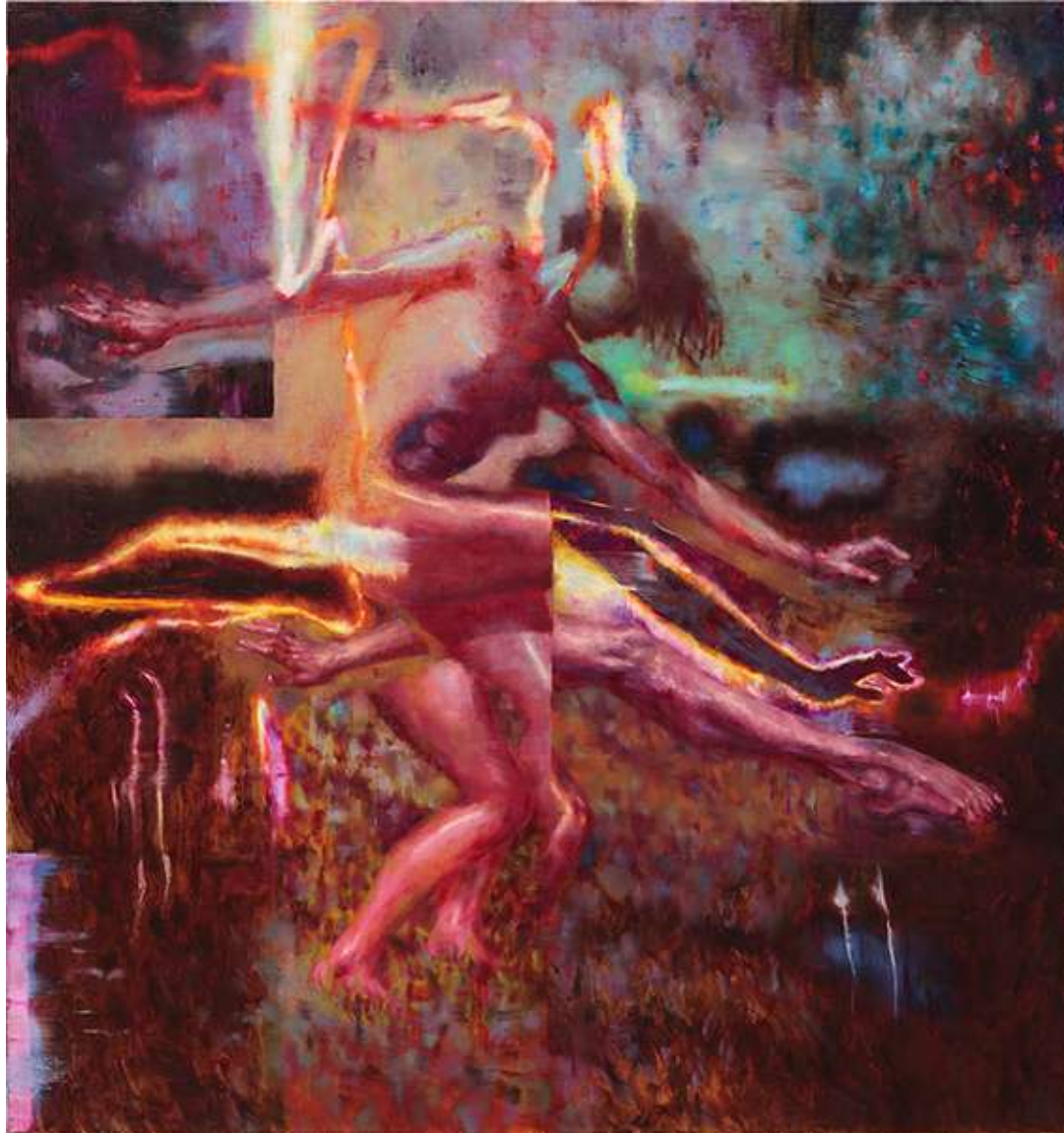
works are materials that developed into large-format oil paintings.

The paintings of this series are centered around the idea of showing the impression of movement by using the fragmentary afterimage rather than linear overlapping of sequences. In other words, more like the images evoked under the eyelid of a light-stunned eye. Książek’s challenge is to recreate these dancers’ movements from performances that were frozen in time by only a few limited historical photographs. Meticulously painted, Książek compiles his research and information through a compilation of images that become a visual representation of the issues he’s raised and focused on. These paintings have the character of a landscape, and yet, are supplemented with a series of

afterimages that project the dynamics of a moving dancer’s body. As such, his work contains quotes and allusions which blend the past with visions of the future.”



Movement, Persons Projects, 2023, Berlin



Composition 02 (Susanne), 2021, oil on canvas, 160 x 150 cm



Composition 07 (Susanne), 2021, oil on canvas, 160 x 150 cm



Movement, Persons Projects, 2023, Berlin



Plate 45, 2023, graphite, watercolour on paper, 61 x 46 cm



Fig. 1. Anna Meroni, "Natività di Sant'Anna" 1905
Fig. 2. Pelli Sant'Anna, 1920

Nossa → left, dark, ruffled, long dress
Pelli → right, light, ruffled, long dress

Plate 43, 2023, graphite, watercolour on paper, 61 x 46 cm



Afterimage 04, 2023, oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm



Afterimage 02, 2023, oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm

PARALLELS, 2016-2018

In his series, titled *Parallels*, Paweł Książek develops his paths of investigation into analytical studies on avant-garde aesthetics and researches the mutual relations between the human body and objects in space, nature and culture, construction and destruction. Taking the work of Lygia Clark and her famed 1960s sculpture series *Bichos* (Creatures) as his point of departure, the artist focuses our attention on the ties between the process of creating art and the emergence of various phenomena in the natural world. The corporal/sculptural and figurative/abstract hybrids in *Parallels* are the titular juxtaposition of corporal objects, and phenomena with analogous properties. *Parallels* is a synthesis and montage, a parallel narrative and play on the depicted structure and

the abstract. This is essentially progress and evolution in the artist's explorations, involving a dual transformation: the object into a subject and the subject into an object. And much as the point of departure for earlier series was the historical avant-garde, in this latest series the foundation is the Brazilian modernist experiments of the 1960s, the evolution of historical avant-garde aesthetics.

Paweł Książek's strategy in *Parallels*, involving the connection of two remote phenomena into a subject-object relationship, was based less on Clark's work than on the principles of playing with images developed in interwar-era photomontages. In terms of his own aesthetics, Paweł Książek explores the concept of physical and sculptural

beauty through his medium of choice: painting. He consciously uses loud colors associated with Latin American modernism. The broad palette in *Parallels* also reminds us of the unusual designs of Mexican architect Luis Barragan, whose bright colors Książek had used in an earlier series, *Constructions* (2016-17), joining the utopias of German Expressionist cinema and the works of Latin American modernist architecture



Parallels, 2018, exhibition view at ZAK | BRANICKA Berlin



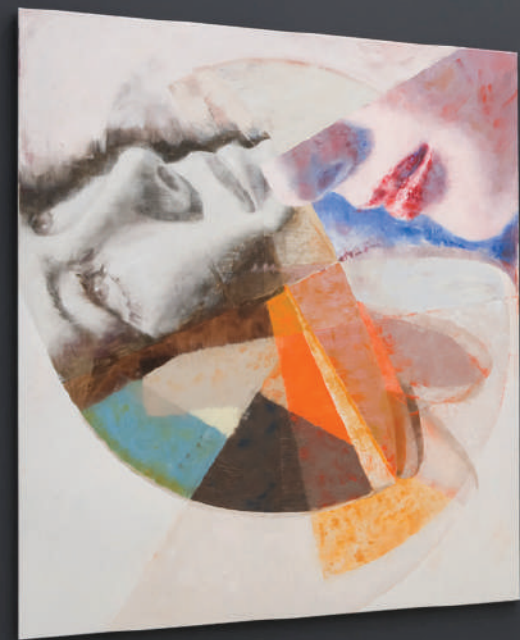
Composition 2 (Veronica Lake), 2016, Oil on canvas, 160 x 150 cm



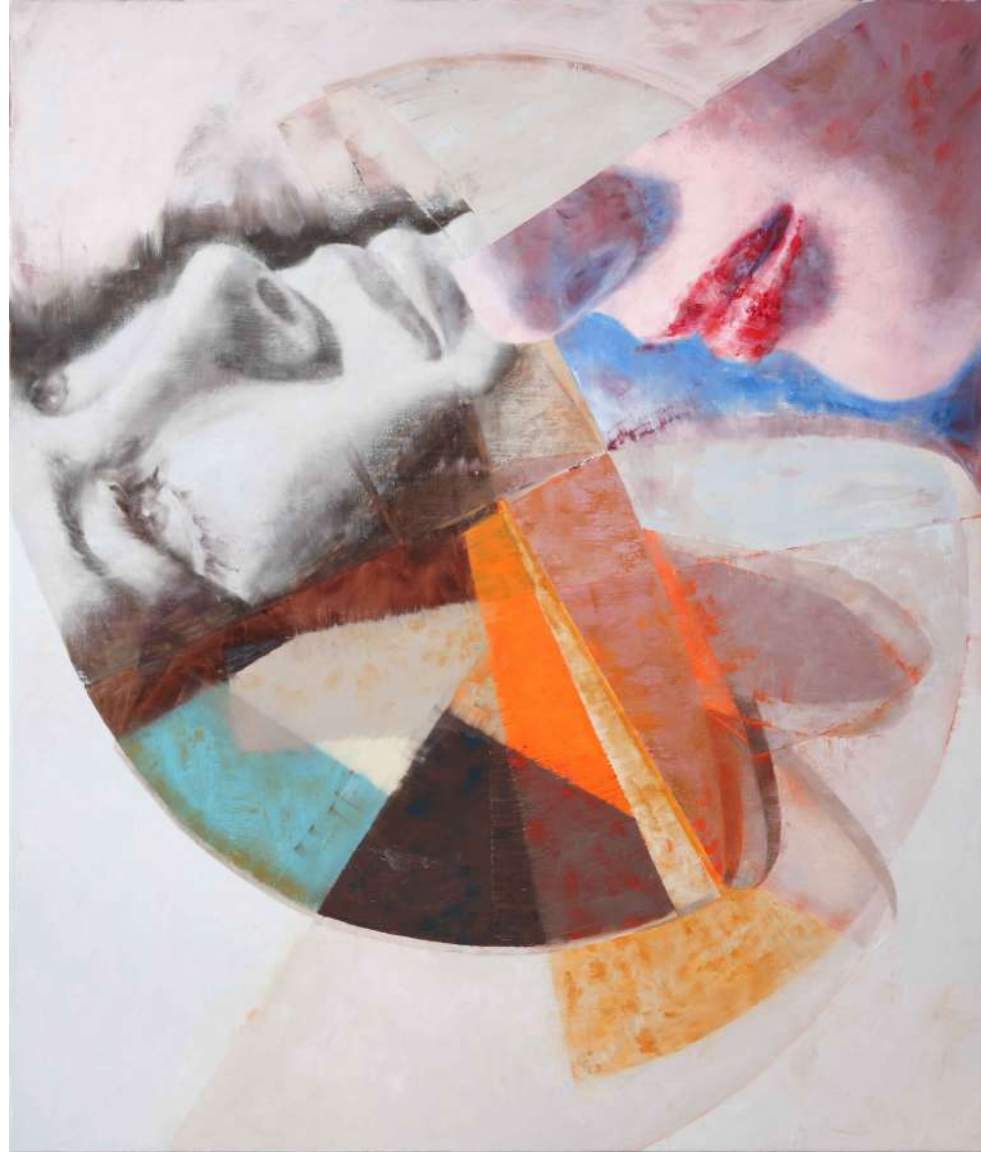
Composition 06 (Lea Seydoux), 2017, Oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm



Composition 19 (Vivien Leigh), 2017, Oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm



Parallels, 2018, exhibition view at ZAK | BRANICKA Berlin



Composition 04 (Veronica Lake), 2017, Oil on canvas, 200 x 170 cm



Composition 05 (Rozalia Chladek), 2017, Oil on canvas, 200 x 170 cm



Composition 13, 2017, Oil on canvas, 160 x 150 cm

FIGURES, 2013-2015

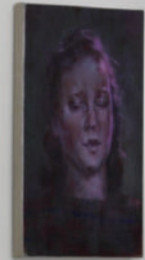
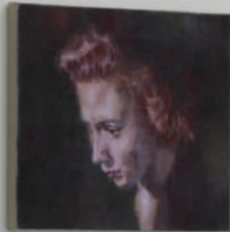
The word “figure” derives from the Latin language; it can be abbreviated as “fig.” or symbolized by the Greek letter “φ”, which refers to the figure. It can be a symbol of luminous flux as well as a golden ratio. Książek used this ambiguity as the starting point for his series of paintings entitled “Figures.”

Paweł Książek is a painter – an analyst. His paintings are a result of a process of research. In the “Figures” series, the collected raw materials include photographs depicting different phenomena or people coming from visual arts, pop culture, movies, or the internet. Książek then classifies and processes them through the medium of painting. In this way, Książek directly refers to the methodology developed by Aby Warburg,

based on building iconographic atlases and their comparative analysis.

Figures is a series of portraits of women. Each one of the paintings includes the abbreviation “fig.” in the title and an ordinal number. The artist states: “This series is my next project relating to the creation of an alternative history of obsessive collecting. I am building an architecture of emotion based on several canons of aesthetic and visual material sources. I do not portray people, but rather create a collection of emotional states”. Książek is reaching out to the traditions of early cinema, searching for a heroine with a distinctive type of beauty: thin lips, sparse eyebrows, and rounded cheeks. Silvia Sidney, one of Fritz Lang’s favorite actresses, possessed these very features. In black and

white films, these actresses resemble porcelain dolls or wax sculptures, almost unreal. When changing the medium to painting, these faces suddenly seem to gain life.



Figures, ŽAK I BRANICKA Gallery, 2014, Berlin



Fig. 54, 2015, oil on canvas, 32 x 43 cm



Fig. 51 (after Man Ray), 2014, oil on canvas, 33 x 42 cm

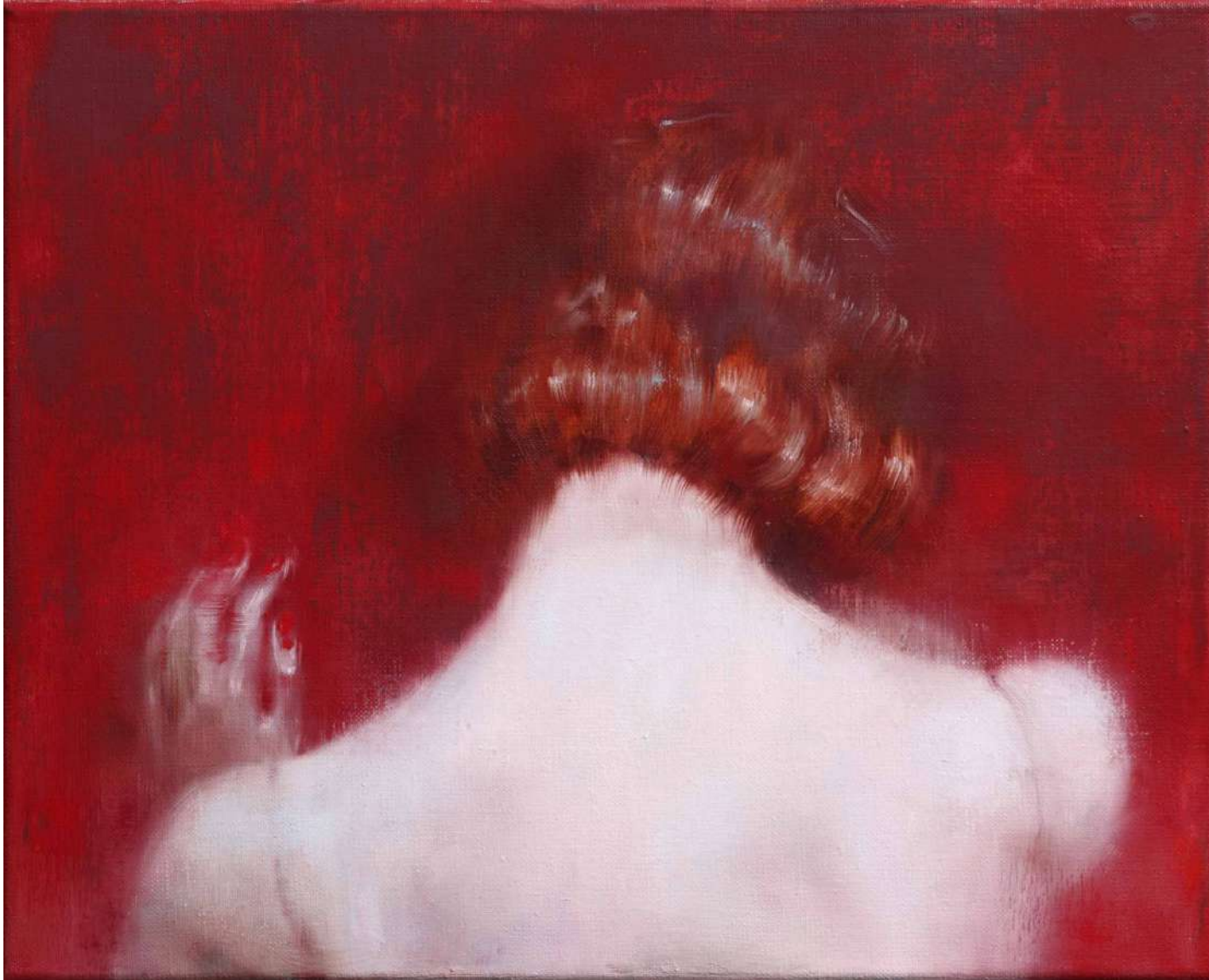


Fig. 48, 2015, oil on canvas, 33 x 42 cm

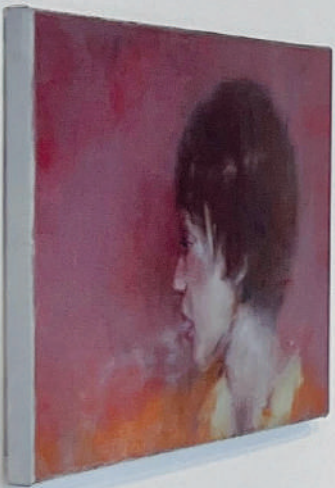
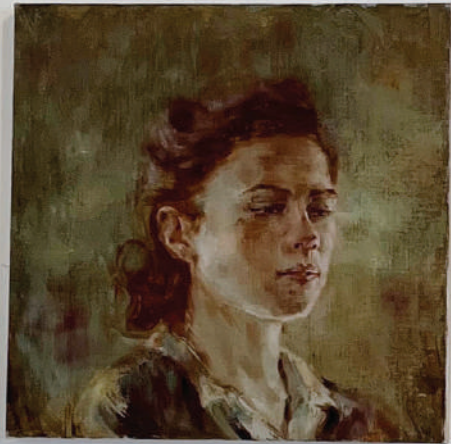




Fig. 55, 2014, oil on canvas, 33 x 42 cm



Fig. 45, 2014, oil on canvas, 33 x 41 cm



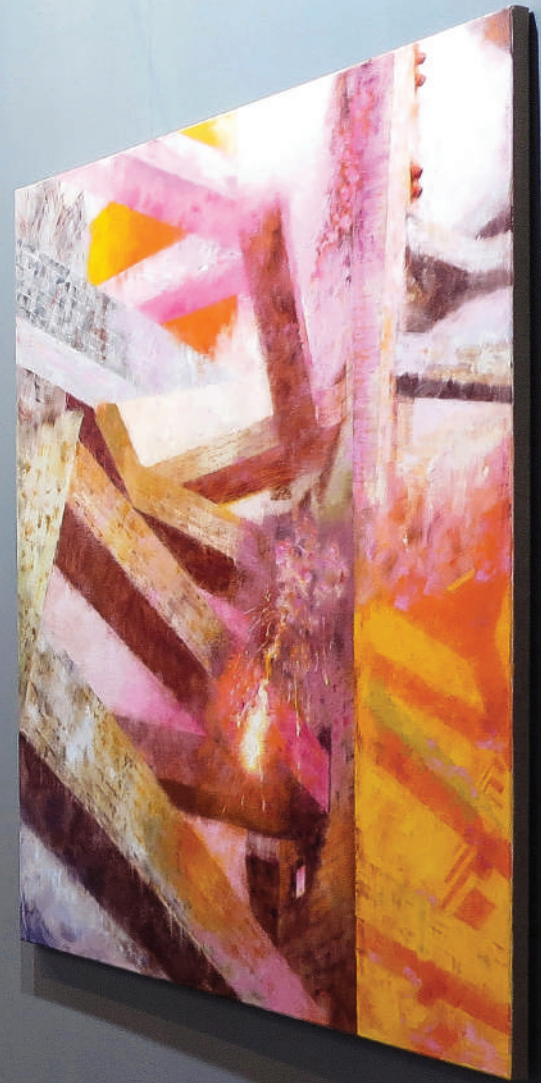
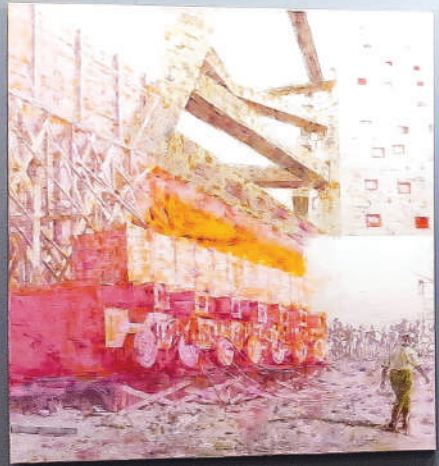
Fig. 47, 2015, Oil on canvas, 33 x 42 cm

CONSTRUCTIONS, 2013-2015

Paweł Książek structures many of his series of works around the intricate and alluding relationship between film and architecture. For many years, he has investigated eastern European modernist architecture of the inter-war era. One of the most important figures of this movement was polish architect Lucjan Korngold whose work is referred to in Książek's Silent Utopia project. His latest body of work focuses on the phenomena of Latin American modernism and refers to works by Niemeyer, Barragán and in particular - Lina Bo Bardi. Paweł Książek researched and discovered that in 1948, in São Paulo, Lina Bo Bardi's studio was established on the 18th floor of a building designed by Lucjan Korngold. He became a naturalized Brazilian citizen in 1949, three years before

Bo Bardi, (Lina in polish means "rope"). This coincidence seems to describe the approach of Paweł Książek to the medium of painting. His work draws the line between historical movements and artifacts, architectural and film motifs are tied together in new constellations. His works, as a result of imagination and wide research, unveil invisible links. Archival materials are mixed and reconstructed in a way that suggests painting as straightforward speculation. This new body of work marks a shift for Książek in his practice in the decomposition of the representation. Here, his interpretation is far more expressive, boarding on the abstract with his introduction of Barragán colors. These current paintings continue to reflect his fascination with old film stills, merging them with select-

ed architectural details enhanced by his skillful use of light as if frozen in Time.





Construction 06, 2016, oil on canvas, 160 x 200 cm



Construction 07, 2016, oil on canvas, 170 x 200 cm



Construction 10, 2016, oil on canvas, 170 x 200 cm



Construction 05, 2016, oil on canvas, 160 x 200 cm



Favela, 2016, Oil on canvas, 160 x 200 cm

NN vs. ARTISTS, 2005-2018

“N.N. vs. Artists,” shows the comprised collection of over 40 found, anonymous images sourced through the internet by Paweł Książek. These unsettling images show young people in “consciousness expanding” activities, usually involving alcohol and sex. The subjects walk a fine line between pranks, sadism, or abuse. This impression is reinforced in these artistically transposed images through references to art history, such as Caravaggio or Vienna Actionism. The references to actionist and performative practices from the 1960s and 70s are shown in the exhibition as a picture dictionary.

“I am working with images found on the Internet, documenting the Jackass antics of young people. I do not know if the persons photographed are zonked out

or only pose for the photos. My intention is to track this strangely close connection between low and high culture, to analyse the border between contemporary art and the specific idiom of those anonymous performers, documented in low quality pictures and showing their weakest moments. As a reference, I base my associations with these images on published documentation of the work of famous performance artists.” (by the artist)



N.N. vs. Artists, Salzburger Kunstverein, 2009, Salzburg

N.N. vs. Artists, Salzburger Kunstverein, 2009, Salzburg



N.N. 26, 2011, oil on canvas, 35 x 25 cm



N.N. 69, 2018, oil on canvas, 160 x 150 cm



N.N. 70, 2018, oil on canvas, 160 x 150 cm





N.N. 71, 2021, oil on canvas, 160 x 150 cm



N.N. 75, 2021, oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cm

SILENT UTOPIA, 2008-2014

Paweł Książek's project *Silent Utopia* is a speculative fantasy regarding the infiltrations and connections between Eastern European modernism in architecture and German silent film of the 1920's. The Art Basel Statements presentation focuses on *Metropolis*, the 1925 film by director and architect, Fritz Lang, and the implementations of such prominent architects of the period. Lang's film conceives of an architectural future directly inspired by the Manhattan skyline. "I saw a street that by means of neon lights was lit as brightly as if it were day. (...) This impression gave me my first idea of a city of the future. The skyscrapers functioned as an opulent theatre-set hung to dazzle, dispel, and hypnotize from a dismal sky." Lang's vision that materialized in *Metropolis* was

unfortunately never accepted by the public.

Architecture, though, surfaced as an astonishingly resilient tool for constructing a vision of the future, both in science fiction film and in reality. The architects of the 20's and 30's were as well dreaming of an idealized person, society and city. Although both visions – the fantastical future projections of the film of the period and the grandiose idealism visible in the architecture– awakened ambitious promises, they were quickly met with public repulsion and dismissed, becoming a silent utopia of broken dreams. Paweł Książek examines the connections between this architecture and the film and based on these connections, he proposes a hypothetical analogy for

the existence of a sensibility common to that era of creators and thinkers. Upon examining both aesthetics, he wonders whether there were visual markers that could have been prognostic of the impending catastrophe. Książek speculates about how a film could look, and how its content would be altered or maintained, when Czech, Hungarian or Polish architecture replaces the scenography.

Książek's paintings and photomontages function as his tools in effacing the border between document and fiction. By juxtaposing and overlaying these two historical phenomena, connected by a trust in the future and contemporaneously created in different places in Europe, Książek has built a new version

of the world and his own fake vision of the past. *Silent Utopia* is simultaneously a historiographical examination of an era and an idealism and a reckoning of the development of the aesthetic relationship between Eastern and Western Europe in modernity. The work that he has created based on archival materials is principally surreal. Asserting that both the past and the future are inaccessible to us, Książek offers us the potentially most efficient way to get know them, in fantasy.



Small white label with text, likely identifying the artwork.



Construction 04, 2014, oil on canvas, 180 x 160 cm



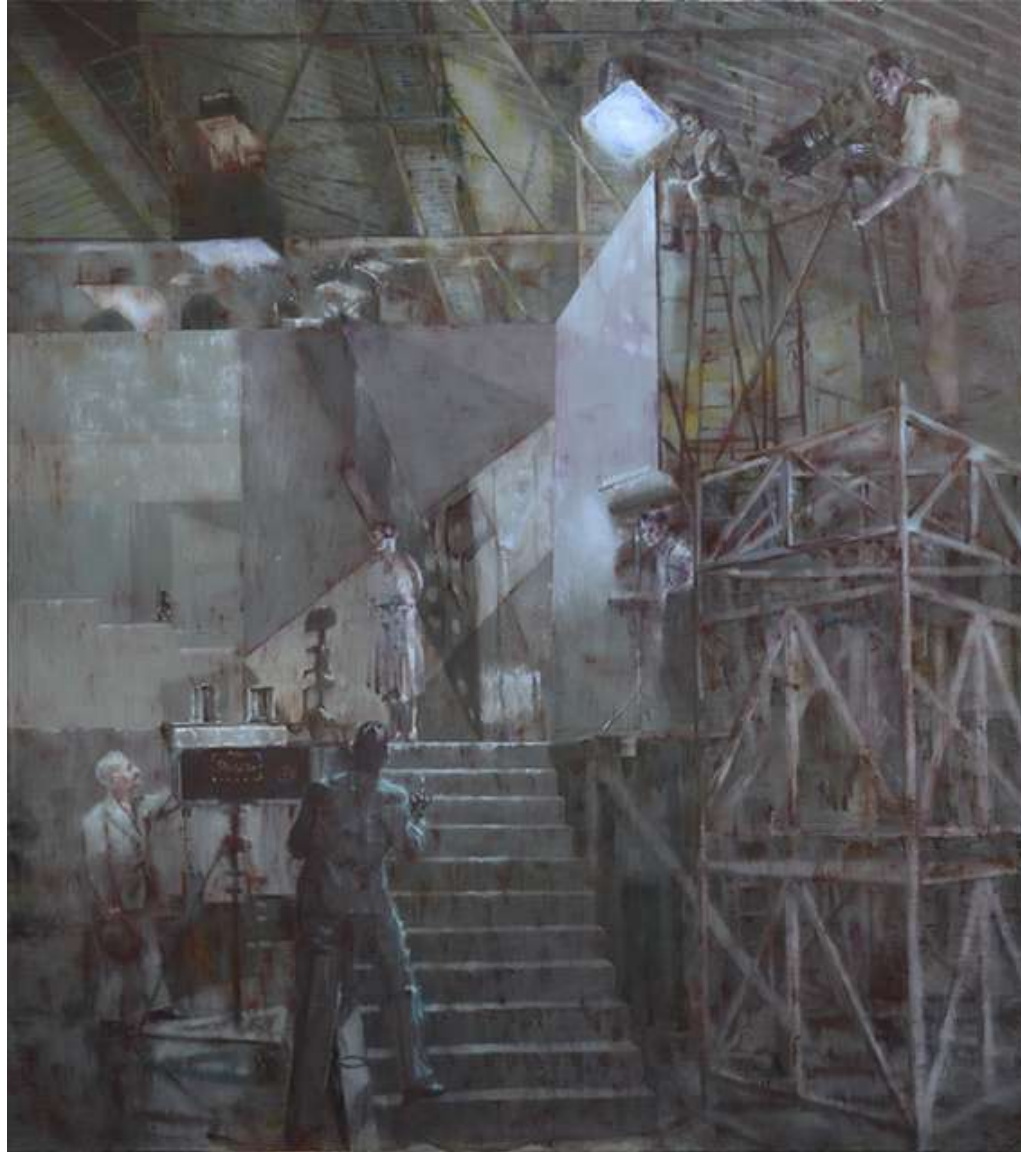
Silent Utopia 17, 2014, oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm



Silent Utopia 15, 2013, oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cm



Silent Utopia, Art Stations Foundation, Stary Browar Gallery, 2009, Poznań



Silent Utopia 16, 2014, oil on canvas, 180 x 160 cm



Construction 02, 2013, oil on canvas, 180 x 160 cm

Persons Projects

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